

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Christmas bird count

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The holidays -the gifts, the time with family and friends, the question of what to do when not eating or watching football.

In 1900, one way to pass the time on Christmas day was to participate in a “side hunt,” where participants would choose sides, then go out and shoot as many birds as possible, the side with the most birds winning. Perhaps not the most conservation-minded activity.

In response, Frank Chapman, an ornithologist at the American Museum of Natural History, proposed counting birds instead of shooting them. Chapman began the tradition of the Christmas Bird Count. Now organized by Audubon, it’s one of the oldest citizen science programs in the country.

The effort is based on counting bird diversity and numbers in numerous circles across the nation, each of which is 15-miles in diameter. Each circle has a Count Compiler who organizes the teams which go out on a given day between mid-December and early January, following established routes and counting bird numbers and types as they go.

At the end of the count, each compiler submits data for their circle, making them available to scientists who can track trends in bird populations, including uncovering declines that can then be addressed.

If interested in participating next year, visit [Audubon.com](http://Audubon.com) to find out about count circles in your area. There is a small fee for participants aged 19 years and older.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.